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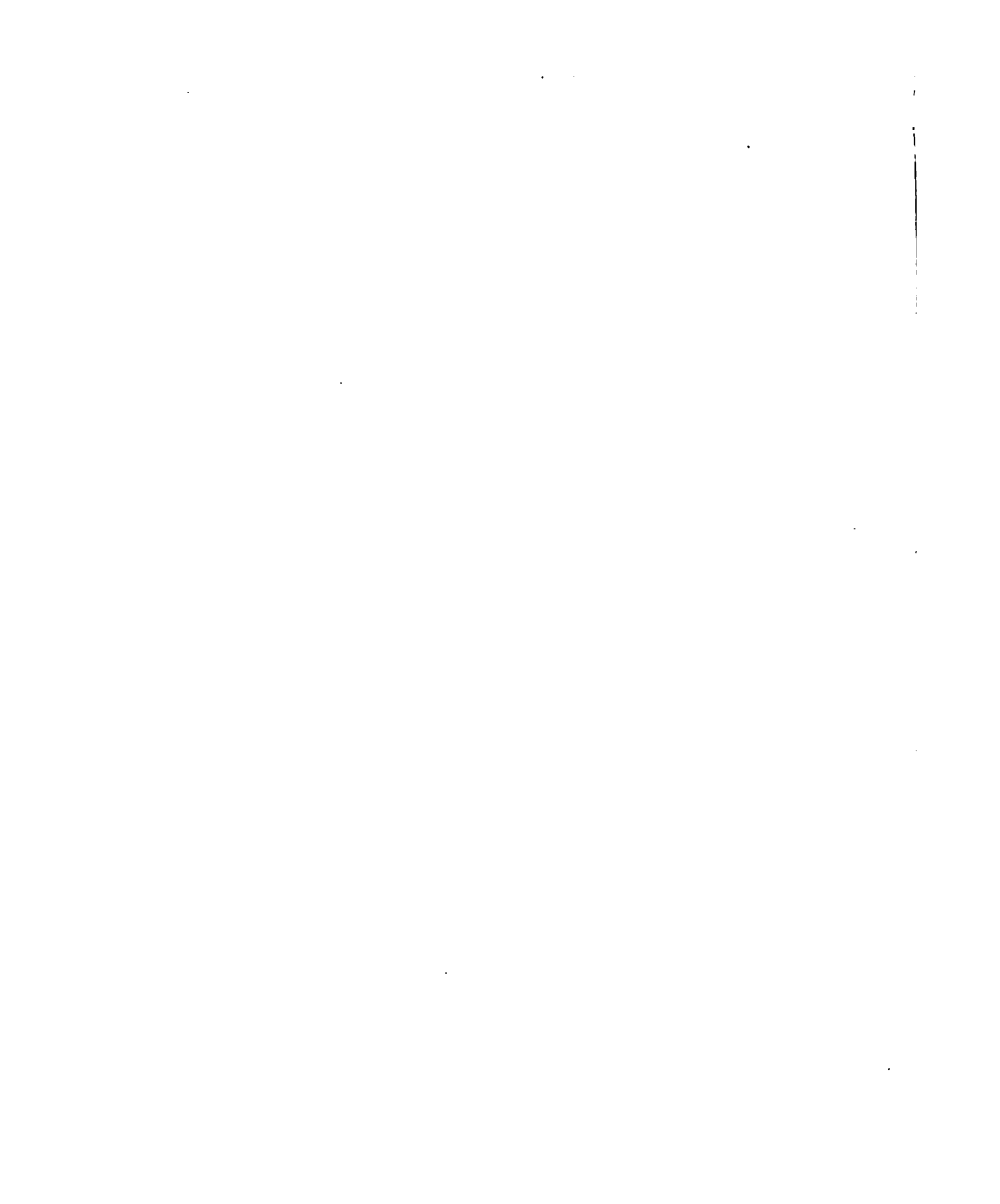
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MOTHER'S NELL

1489. f. 1861.





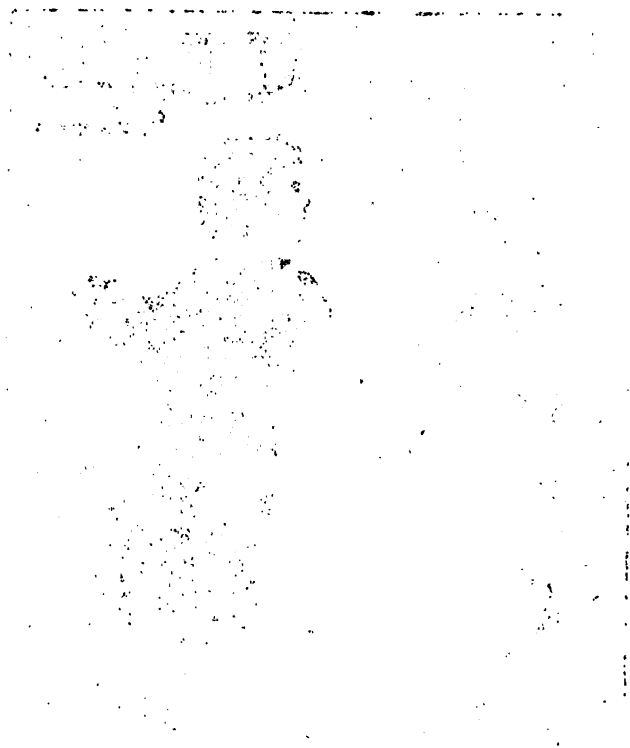
MOTHER'S NELL.



"Oh mother, stop: here's Nell!"—Page 84

THE CONELL.

AND
THE
THE



MOTHER'S NELL.

BY

E. R. G.

London :

WILLIAM HUNT AND COMPANY,

12, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1877.



TO MY FATHER,

THE

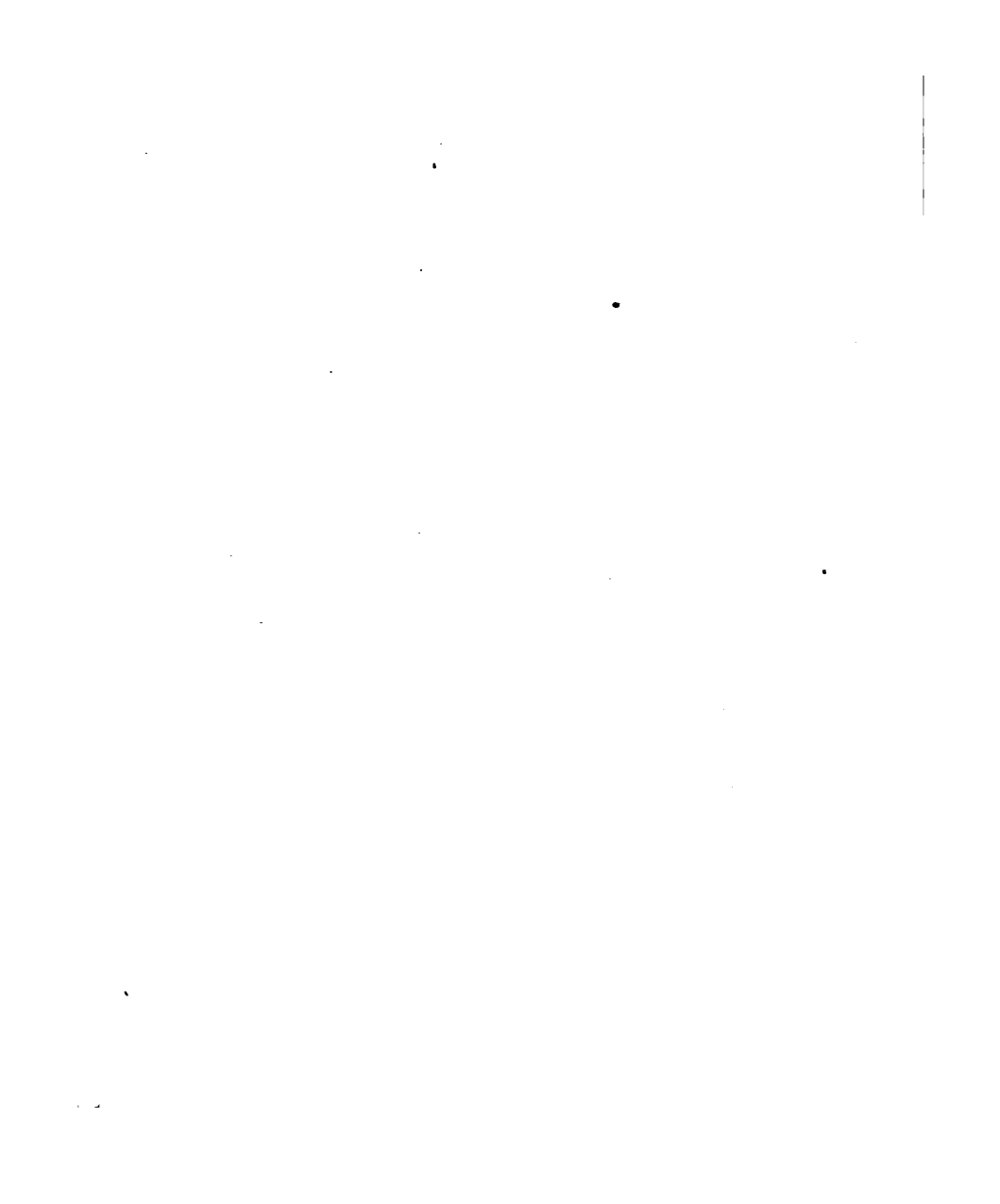
REV. SAMUEL GARRATT,

VICAR OF ST. MARGARET'S, IPSWICH,

IN REMEMBRANCE OF HIS MINISTRY

IN

TRINITY CHURCH, ST. GILES', LONDON,



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MOTHER'S NELL.



ERRATUM.

Page 10, line 10 from top, for "*said*" read "*and*."

Ⓔ lighted in the thickly crowded streets of London, when a poor woman, thinly clad, might have been seen hurrying along one of the dirty alleys of St. Giles'.

An old tattered shawl was pinned across her shoulders. Her dress was torn and ragged. And on her head was a bonnet—if bonnet it could be called, being merely composed of a few

straws tied down with a piece of crape,—which was once black, but through age was now a rusty looking brown.

In her arms she held a bundle, wrapped round with her shawl so that nothing could be distinguished ; but presently the bundle moved, and a little black curly head thrust itself out of the old shawl, and looking into the woman's face with large pleading eyes, said in a weak wailing voice, "I'm so cold, said so hungry, mother : when will Daddy come?"

The mother looked down, and her lips quivered, as she clasped the child closer to her.

"May be he'll come soon Nell," she said.

"To-morrow, mother?"

"To-morrow, or next day, perhaps."

"I hope he'll come soon, mother : he always gets us som'at to eat." And the child began to cry bitterly.

"Don't cry, Nell : don't cry ! Daddy'll come soon ; or if he don't, mother 'll get you some

bread. Yes," she added, muttering to herself, "I'll get her something to stop her craving hunger, somehow or other, or she'll starve. One has been taken from me. My child shall not die. Surely one is enough: death don't ought to rob me of my little Nell too,—the only one I have left:" and tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Don't cry, mother; Daddy'll soon come back: you said he would." And Nell, as she spoke, wiped away her mother's tears with her own little hands.

"Yes, yes; he'll come soon." But even as she said it the remembrance of the dark grave into which she had seen her husband laid only a week before, rose vividly before her mind, and the thought that she would never see him again made her lips grow almost white with despair. She did not then know of the "everlasting life," neither did she understand or believe in the "resurrection of the dead."


"Only a week ago." But it seemed years to

the poor weary wife. She would never forget those seven dark days! And, oh, the hunger, the want, the misery, since he had died! If it had only been herself who had suffered she could have borne it, although no one knew the pain of hunger better than she did; but it was positive agony for the mother to hear her little child's constant cry for bread, and to see her grow thinner and thinner before her very eyes: her little Nell, her little black-haired treasure,—the only one left her in the wide world so full of people, the only one living for whom she cared! No: not quite the only one. There was one other person who had a warm corner in this poor woman's heart, and that was a clergyman, who, when her husband was dying, had come in, and sitting down by the bedside, had talked to him. He was rather an old-looking man, with soft grey hair; and although the woman did not listen to what he said, for her eyes and ears were for her husband alone, she saw with

wonder and thankfulness that his words calmed him ; and the light that broke over his face, and the look of peace in his eyes, were a greater comfort to her than the clergyman ever guessed. She could not help loving any one who had brought peace and quietness to her dying husband.

But the clergyman and little Nell were the only people she loved ; and it was terrible for the mother to see her child wasting before her very eyes, just for want of bread.

“Bread : bread !” was the cry from morning till night. To get her little Nell “a bit of som’at” was all she cared for. As for herself, she only ate to keep herself alive for her child’s sake : she would have been glad to have laid down and died, if it had not been for little Nell. Life had no pleasures for her ; and although the grave looked dark and dreary, life was dark and dreary too, and in death there seemed to be rest. But little Nell ! She could



not die and leave Nell,—her five-year old little girl,—no more than she could have borne to see Nell die and leave her.

These were the thoughts that ran through her mind as she hurried along the crowded streets, hugging her child in her arms. The pavement was cold and wet to her badly-shod feet, for it had been raining all day, and the lamp-lights were reflected in the puddles; but the wet and cold did not hurt her so long as it did not touch her child, who would have been almost too old for her to have carried so far only that she was so thin and small.

Presently they turned up a narrow street, and found it densely crowded. Men, women, and children were there, looking with eager up-turned faces at one object. Inside the railings of a church, which stood rather back from the road and slightly raised from the pavement, stood three or four men, one of whom was speaking in a clear penetrating voice

to the crowd below him. Nell's mother did not stop to listen, did not even look towards the speaker: she pushed her way perseveringly through the crowd, with a face full of dull despair and terrible in its hopelessness. She wanted nothing but bread just now. What was the use of stopping when her child's face was growing whiter with hunger and cold?

Suddenly Nell raised her small head, and bent forward eagerly: a word had caught her ear which made her listen with breathless attention.

Clear and distinct fell these words on the ears of the crowd: "I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he" ——

But Nell could listen no longer: she almost threw herself from her mother's arms, in her eagerness to get the bread spoken of; but her mother held her closer.

"Hush, Nell: hush! Let us listen."

And the woman, now thoroughly aroused,

edged her way nearer the railings. But Nell could not be quieted.

"But mother, he says if we go to him he will give us bread. Why don't we go now to him?"

"Hush!" whispered the mother, tenderly.

And she bent eagerly forward: she had missed some of the words, and was afraid of missing more.

Little Nell's head dropped on her mother's shoulder again, for she was nearly exhausted with hunger; and although she still listened with strained ears to catch each word as it fell from the speaker's lips, she looked heavy and tired, and her face grew whiter. Her mother's eyes were filled with tears, for she recognized the clergyman as being the one who had spoken words of comfort and peace to her husband when he was dying; and she could not think of the one whom this day week she had seen buried far down beneath the cold earth, without a terrible heart-ache.

“Jesus is ready, waiting to give you this bread; then why will you not accept it?” were the next words they heard; “and He is not only waiting, but longing to give it to you; for there is not a man, woman, or child in this crowd whom the Lord Jesus does not love, and long to have for His own: and it is you who are unwilling to receive, and not the Lord who is unwilling to give this great gift. Then why not come? why not accept this Bread of Life, which is so lovingly held out, even to the most vile and sinful of you?”

Without waiting to hear more the woman turned away, disappointed, hopeless as before. She had a wild hope, when she heard the clergyman's first words, that he meant the earthly bread; but the hope had passed away, leaving her more miserable than ever. The words had brought before her mind vividly, a little country cottage by the quiet hill-side, with the sun pouring through the lattice

window, and smiling on her grandmother's peaceful face and white cap, as she murmured softly the very words which this poor weary woman had just heard :—

“And Jesus said unto them, I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.”

“Mother,” said little Nell, in a faint voice,—
“mother, are you going to Jesus? Whereabouts does He live?”

“Not in London, Nell: nowhere where us poor folks can find Him.” And a weary sigh accompanied the words.

“But mother, He must; for the gentleman says so. Let us look for Him till we find Him, shall we, mother? Or may be, if we was to ask some one they might tell us.”

The last words were hardly audible; for hunger and weariness were too much for the child, and her eyes closed.

CHAPTER II.

OLD GRANNY.

THE night drew on, and with it large flakes of snow dropped down softly and swiftly from the skies, making black, dirty London look for once pure and white. Little Nell's mother hastened on, whither she did not know; only when they passed warm eating-houses did she linger and look, with the wild hope that some one might take pity on them and give them something to eat. But no one did. Presently she came up to a baker's cart standing in the road, the lid of which was a little open, and displayed to the hungry woman's eyes row after row of fragrant white bread.

The street into which she had turned was

broad, with tall dark houses on each side, and but for the occasional curtained window, through which the warm firelight might be seen flickering and gleaming in fitful flashes of light, it looked gloomy and uninviting.

Nell's mother had just seen the baker boy going down the steps of the area, the kitchen door opened to let him in, and quickly shut behind him because of the cold air which made the servants shiver as it swept into the kitchen, and now she looked down the long dark street. Only one human being was to be seen, and that was a gentleman coming towards them with an umbrella in front of his face to prevent it being covered with the cold snow. No one was near. It might be the only chance she would have that evening of getting something for her starving child to eat. So thought the woman as she quickly thrust her hand inside the cart, and hurriedly ran down the quiet street into a crowded one, carrying a loaf with her.

She looked about for a dark corner, and when she had found it she sat down on a doorstep and tried to wake Nell ; but this was a hard thing to do.

“ Nell, Nell : look what I have got for you ! ” cried the mother anxiously ; but Nell did not move.

Her mother rubbed her little cold feet, took her own ragged shawl off and folded it two or three times round her child, and at last she was rewarded by seeing the little sharp black eyes open dreamily ; but as her mother held up the loaf before her she stretched out her hands eagerly for it. The loaf was a small one, and piece after piece went into little Nell’s mouth, and not until she was entirely satisfied did the mother take a morsel herself, and what remained was by no means enough to satisfy a starving woman ; but so long as her child had enough, what did it signify about her own hunger ? Nell’s mother had grown so hardened to stealing

that she hardly thought of it as a sin, if she thought at all about it. This was how they had lived day after day, and her only fear was that the policemen might see her and take her into custody.

She would rather steal than beg,—she was proud at heart, and had never begged in her life; but to-night Nell looked paler and felt colder than ever. So she determined to try and forget her pride; and holding up her child to a passer-by, she begged for a few pence for her little one's sake.

"I never encourage beggars," was the answer she received, as the gentleman pulled his coat tighter round him, and felt in his pocket to see if his gold were safe.

Once more she begged, of an older looking gentleman, with white hair and a white beard.

"I'm a poor woman, and haven't a halfpenny in the world!" she cried in despair. "My

husband is dead, and my child even near dying too."

"My good woman," said the gentleman, half impatiently, but not unkindly, "I haven't a penny to spare, I assure you;" but on looking up he encountered such a pair of black, sharp little eyes that seemed to read through him, and know that he was telling a lie. What was it had made his pocket hang so heavily but an expensive toy for his little grandchild, just bought at Soho Bazaar for her birthday present? He had had a pound or two to spare for *that* little girl, whom he pictured in his mind's eye running to meet him, fairy like, in her white muslin dress and blue ribbons; could not he spare a penny to this poor little pale, shrunken girl, who lay in her mother's arms, looking at him with such sorrow and pain written in her childish face that he would never forget it.

He felt in his pocket, and laid a sixpence in the woman's hand.

She grasped it eagerly and thankfully.

"If there is a God, may He bless you and your's!" exclaimed the woman; and then turning her face to little Nell, cried joyfully, "My little Nell shall have a supper to-night, anyways."

"What shall you get, mother?" asked the child.

"You may choose, Nell: it don't make no difference to me, so long as you are pleased. Only we must keep enough for a night's lodging."

"In Great Wild Street?"

"Do you want to go back there, Nell?"

"Yes: 'cause maybe Daddy 'll come back; and if he should find us gone he'd be sorry."

"Then we'll go back, Nell," said the weary woman, who could not find it in her heart to tell her little girl that Daddy had died, and would never come back to Great Wild Street.

"I know what I should like best for supper, mother."

"What dear?"

"A herring, mother. Oh, won't it be good? I can smell it even now! And Daddy used to like herrings. I guess if he smell 'em it will make him all the gladder to come home."

"Yes, Nell: then we'll get a couple."

"Can't we get three?—one for Daddy, you know."

"I don't think Daddy 'll come back to-night, Nell dear; but we'll get three if you like."

It was a happy evening for little Nell, and happy for the mother, insomuch as her child was pleased; although there was one thing to mar the child's happiness, and that was that the place in which they had before lodged was already given to another family, and they had to sleep for the night in a dark cellar, making Nell afraid that Daddy would never find them.

There was another occupant of the cellar, who, when she had lighted her fire, proved to be an old woman with snow white hair hanging loosely about her face. At first Nell was fright-

ened at her, and nestled closer up to her mother ; but when she had looked longer at the old bent head her fears went away, and she crept closer to the fire, while her mother arranged the few chips she had managed to scrape together for lighting a fire in order to cook their herrings.

The old woman did not look up at her : she sat crouching down, with her hands clasped, and her white head bent as if listening.

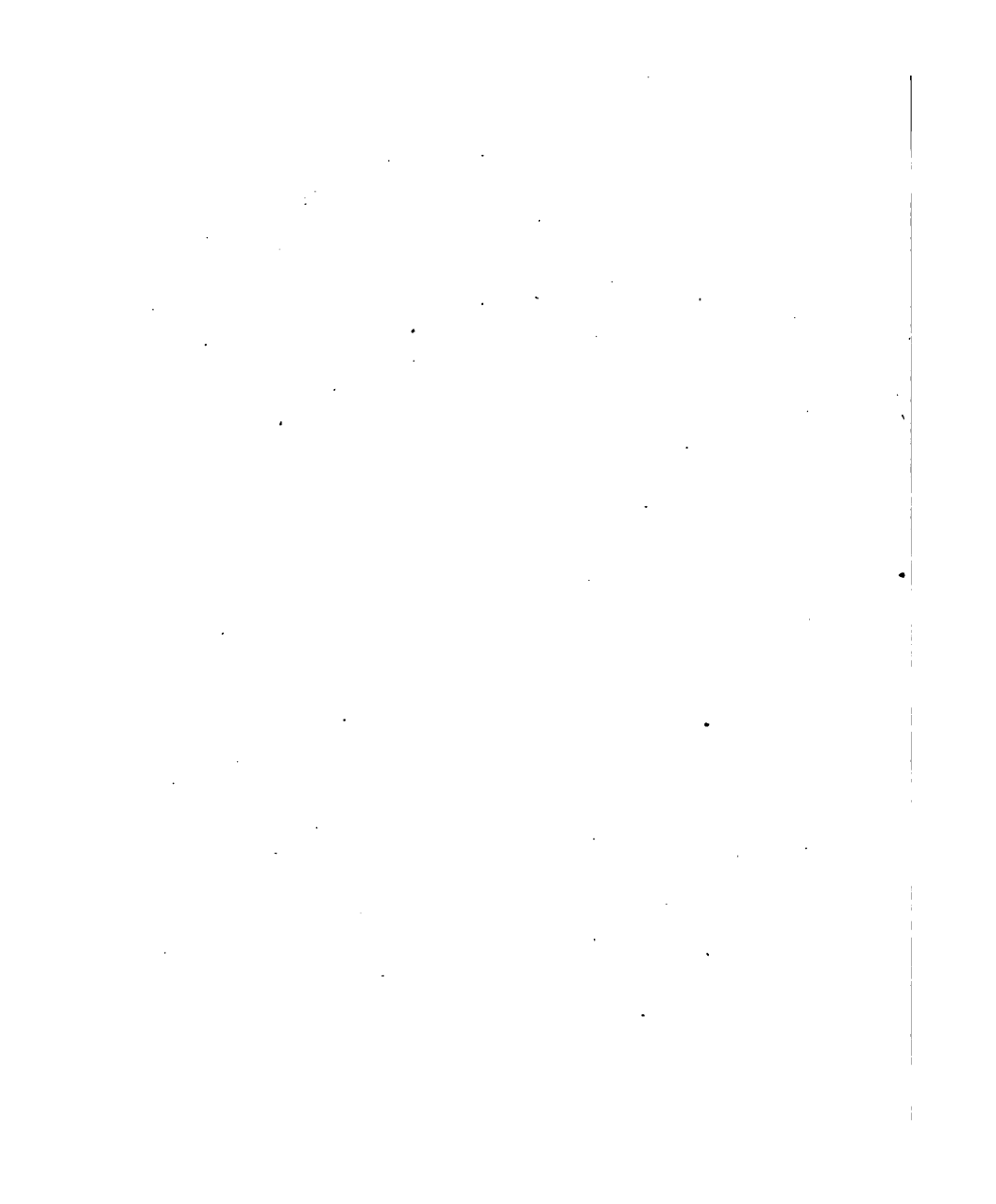
"He'll come," she murmured presently to herself, nodding her head. "Don't get impatient, Granny, he'll come, 'at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning.'"

Nell, who at her first murmured words had shrunk back, now came nearer, and laying her small hand on the old woman's wrinkled one, and looking up into her weather-beaten face, said, "My Daddy is away too ; but may be he'll come back to-night, just as your's may : do you think they will ?"

The old woman had been so wrapped in her



"Don't get impatient, Granny, he'll come."--Page 26.



own thoughts that she had not noticed the mother and her child ; so when little Nell's hand touched her's she turned round quickly, and as her eyes fell on the child by her side, a look of disappointment passed over her face.

"I thought it was Him come at last for me," sighed the old woman, and then added in a lower voice, "Patience, Granny : patience ! 'at midnight : ' it ain't midnight yet !"

"Who did you think it was?" asked Nell, softly.

"Why the Lord, the dear Lord Himself, come to take me to live with Him at last. My Lord Jesus ; but He'll come soon, and till then Granny must wait."

"The Lord Jesus !" cried Nell. "Mother, do you hear ? She knows Jesus ! Did He ever give you bread, Granny ?"

"Bread !" answered the old woman, looking up with a queer bright smile on her face. "He gived me just all I need, for He has given me Himself."

"But you aint got Him now," said little Nell, looking round the room.

"I've had Him ever since I was a little girl of your age, and He 's never left me,—no, never."

"But He aint here," persisted Nell.

"Aye, aye, He's here, though maybe you don't see Him. He is just close to Granny, and some day He'll lay His hand on Granny's, and whisper, 'Granny, come up higher;' and He'll take me up to his own home, to live with Him for ever. May be He'll come this night, this very night. Come, Lord Jesus, come."

"Where does He live, Granny, for mother and me want to find Him too? How did you find Him, Granny?"

"*He found me*, dearie, just as a shepherd would find a silly lamb that was straying from the fold; and ever since He found me, He has taken care of me."

"And do He love you mighty much, Granny?"

“That He do, little un. Why He is looking at me all day, and is watching to see I don’t get no harm. And He often talk to me, too.”

Nell’s mother had been listening unperceived. She was leaning against the wall, looking down at the old woman and the child with weary longing eyes, and now and then a tear had stolen down her cheeks.

How happy the old woman looked, despite her ragged clothes and furrowed brow ! What would not the weary mother have given to have been able to believe that there was a loving father looking down on *her*, and taking care of *her* !

But she could not believe that if there was a God, He *could* care for her,—a poor sinful woman ; so, instead of looking forward to a bright home where there could be no more pain, tears, want, or death, there was nothing but a desolate blank before her,—or worse still, a burning hell. She could bear to think of it no

longer ; so called Nell to the scanty fire where the herrings were already cooking, and, as Nell said, beginning to smell ever so good.

Nell danced round the fire, clapping her hands, till the herrings were quite ready for eating.

"Granny ain't got none, mother," said Nell, looking gravely at her herring : "she shall have a bit of mine."

"You need not divide your's, Nell," returned her mother. "It is too late for father to come home to-night, I guess, so you can give the third one to the poor old woman."

Nell looked a little doubtful at first, but finally handed the herring to Granny.

"This is for you, poor old Granny," said Nell, stooping forward on tip-toe, at the same time, to leave a kiss on her wrinkled brow.

"For me, little one !" exclaimed Granny, gratefully. "Blessings on the sweet child, and on the little mouth that kissed poor old Granny :

it is many a year since any one has loved her to kiss her, except the blessed Lord Jesus. For ain't it said in His holy Word, 'Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth : for thy love is better than wine.' And this 'ere herring, 'tis just a present from the dear Lord Jesus, and the kiss too. 'Twas sweet to my heart, little one : give old Granny another."



CHAPTER III.

LOST.

THE next day, when little Nell ran out into the street, she saw that everything was dazzling white,—so white, that it almost made her eyes ache to look at it : it was as if a band of beautiful angels had passed through the city during the night, and had left some of their lovely brightness behind to cheer the weary eyes of the citizens, who seldom saw anything so white and sparkling in the sombre streets of the city. But it did not last for long : towards evening a thaw set in, making London look more dirty and dingy than ever.

This was not such a happy evening for Nell and her mother as the last one had been ; for

they had had a bad day of it, only getting just enough money to pay for the night's lodging and a crust of bread to eat. Neither they nor Granny had a fire that night, and the cellar grew colder and colder as the darkness increased ; and Granny kept whispering to herself,

“He'll come soon, Granny : you must wait awhile. At midnight may-be, or at the cock-crowing.”

Nell cried herself to sleep in her mother's arms. Her feet were nearly blue with cold, and even the old shawl wrapped so lovingly round her could not keep the piercing wind, which swept through every crevice, from finding her out.

They wandered about the streets of London the following day, begging. A penny or two had been given to little Nell, but that was all. Suddenly the child was startled by her mother's voice, saying,—

“Look, Nell : look ! Do you see that ?”

Nell looked across the road.

Opposite them was a pawn-shop ; and hanging just outside was a warm cloak,—a brown cloak,—that would keep little Nell warm all the winter through.

“My little Nell shall have that cloak,” said the mother, hurriedly. “Sit down on that step till I come back.”

And in another moment she was across the road, and had the thick warm cloak in her hand.

Suddenly Nell, who was watching eagerly, sprang up with a cry, as she saw her mother hurrying away from her with a policeman by her side.

“Mother, mother !” cried the child, as she pattered along the cold wet pavement with her bare feet. “Oh mother, stop : here’s Nell !”

But no mother answered.

Once, indeed, Nell saw her look back at her with an expression she had never seen on her face before ; but further and further they seemed

to be hurrying away from her, and fainter and fainter grew Nell's voice as she wailed out, "Mother, mother!"

The passers-by stopped to look after her for a moment, but, like the Priest and the Levite in the parable, "passed by" without helping her. Farther and farther ran Nell, trying to keep in view the tall policeman's hat, but all in vain: they were soon quite lost to her sight.

But even then she did not give up the search. Street after street the child turned down, peering about with her sharp black eyes into every dark corner, for fear of missing her mother: but no mother was there.

The afternoon drew to a close; and the winter's evening began with a cold, drizzling rain.

Nell grew faint and sick. She did not know where she was, nor where to go; till suddenly old Granny came into her mind, and, seeing a little girl standing idly at the corner of the

street, she asked her way to Great Wild Street.

She was nearer to it than she knew. In turning into so many streets she had unknowingly found her way back to St. Giles' parish, and she soon found her way to their old cellar. By the dim twilight she could just discern Granny's white hair, and could hear her whispered prayer:—

"At midnight, Lord, at midnight fetch Granny home."

"Granny, Granny," sobbed the tired child, as she sank down by her side. "Oh, Granny, mother's gone—gone; and I want her ever so bad! Dear Granny, bring her back to me!"

But Granny looked perplexed, and only smoothed the child's hair as she said,—

"Never mind, dearie. It aint midnight yet: may-be He'll come then."

And little Nell, thoroughly exhausted, was soon asleep, with her head on Granny's lap.

And Nell's mother? When she had first felt the policeman's hand on her arm, her thoughts flew back to her child whom she had left sitting on the door-step.

"I'll come with you," said the woman, in a trembling voice: "only I must fetch my child."

"And escape meanwhile," said the policeman, gruffly. "No, no: that'll never do."

"But she's there on that step. I must, I will have her!"

But the noise of the omnibuses and cabs rumbling heavily along the road made her voice unintelligible.

"She's a little girl," she began again, in a trembling voice: "only just turned five. Have you no compassion in you? I cannot leave her: it is cruel,—cruel of you!"

The policeman looked round for a moment; but the crowd was great, and he saw no little girl.

But the mother's eyes were sharper: she saw

her little Nell, in her ragged frock and bare feet, pattering after her; and looked on the small pinched face, and curly black hair, and eyes which were so full just now of terror, with a strange expression. Despair, revenge, and love chased each other in turns across her face, as she looked her last on her child's face; and turning suddenly a sharp corner, she was lost to her sight.

For ever? At the thought of that a terrible faintness came over her, and the next thing she remembered was awaking in a cold, dark cell, with the kind face of a lady bending over her.

"You are better now?" were the first words she heard.

"I shall never be better," said Nell's mother, bitterly. "I shall die without my child."

"Let me know how it all happened," said the chaplain's wife, kindly.

A miserable story it was. The poverty, hunger, cold; the death of her husband; and,

lastly, the cruel loss of her child, without whom life to her seemed ten times worse than death.

Tears were in the listener's eyes as she said kindly, "My husband will come and see you : he will be able to comfort you better than I can ; and better than all, it is said, 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.' For although you have sinned against God so much, He is loving still ; and as you would comfort your own little Nell, however she had displeased and grieved you, if she was in trouble, so will He comfort you."

"He cannot love *me*," sobbed the woman. "I've never loved Him ; never even tried to please Him. No, He cannot love me : Heaven aint for us poor folk."

"There was once a man," said the chaplain's wife, "who, like you, was a thief. After a life of sin, he was, as you, imprisoned, and condemned to be crucified with another man like himself. And the same day they were crucified another

was crucified,—a third. It was the Lord Jesus Christ dying for our sakes. ‘Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.’ Those were the words of the dying thief; the words of a man who had been displeasing the same Lord Jesus daily, hourly,—who had, like you, never really loved Him or tried to please Him, as far as we know. Yet he dared say these words, ‘Lord, remember me.’”

“Well?” said the woman eagerly, as the chaplain’s wife waited a moment before going on.

“We should have expected that the man would have been rebuked, would have been told that as he had been sinning against God all his life long, that there was no hope for him now that his last hour had come; but listen to Christ’s answer. ‘Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.’ It was for that very thief that the Lord was dying that day, so that His blood might wash away his sin; and it was for you He was dying: for

you and for me, weak, sinful women, who are so constantly displeasing our Maker ; for ‘ Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’ ”

“ Dear Lord, remember Nell and me ! ” was the prayer that the poor woman in that dark prison cell sent up that evening when the chaplain’s wife had left, and the prayer was heard in the court of Heaven, and was answered.



CHAPTER IV.

THE MIDNIGHT CALL.

FOR two or three days little Nell lived with Granny. During the daytime she went about quite alone begging, and always brought home the few pence she had over, to be kept by the old woman.

They did not talk much to each other, and when they did, it was mostly about the Lord Jesus, for Granny did not seem to understand anything else.

But that she loved Nell was quite plain, and she grew to watch eagerly for the sound of her little footsteps in the evening, and was restless till the child was by her side.

“Granny,” said Nell one day, “if the Lord

Jesus was to come now and take you away, would He take me too ?”

“When it’s your time, little one,” was Granny’s answer.

“But, Granny, maybe He’ll come before my time, and I shall be all alone.”

“The Lord will provide,” said Granny simply.

“Provide what ?” asked Nell.

“A home, dearie : never fear. Jesus knows all about little Nell, and will take care of her.”

“But I’m so little, Granny, I guess He don’t see me.”

“He sees the tiniest bird, and knows when each little sparrow falls.”

Nell was silent for some time, and then asked where the Lord Jesus would take her to.

“To His own home, Nell : to the court of Heaven, where the King Himself lives.”

“Mother tell me one day that all the people as goes to the Queen has mighty grand dresses. Have you a grand dress, Granny ?”

"Nay, nay, little one, but the Lord He'll give me one if I need it; and I hear say one day that He will give me a clean white dress, Nell, instead of my ragged one. Anyways, dearie, I know my Jesus will give me just all I need."

"What's His home like, Granny?" asked Nell.

"It's just beautiful, Nell; and I 'spects what makes it so beautiful is the Lord being there."

That day Nell was slow to go out begging. She evidently felt disinclined so to do, and lingered about so apparently that at last Granny noticed it, and asked her why she did not go, for it was getting late in the day.

"Because," said Nell, "I'm afeared the Lord Jesus will come when I'm out, and then I shouldn't see Him."

"I guess you won't see Him anyways, Nell, —not till your time to go home comes. But although you don't see Him, little one, He is here now. Yes: just close to Granny and Nell.

The dear Lord He never leaves us, Nell ; but when He calls us home we shall see His face, while now we can only know He is near. Dear Lord, call Granny home soon : ‘ at midnight, or at the cockcrowing,’ Lord.”

So Nell went out, although it was growing dusk. She wandered up and down the streets, but got no pence to-day. She began to grow weary, and her eyelids drooped heavily over her little sharp black eyes, and her feet looked blue and cold.

No one saw little Nell, or if they did they took no notice of her ; that is to say, no one whom Nell could *see*.

But there *was* someone looking at her, watching His little wandering lamb, for whom He died eighteen hundred years ago on the terrible cross. One who felt each quivering pain that shot through her, and every cold shudder that passed over His little one. He never lost sight of her, although she did not see Him.

"I wonder," thought Nell to herself, suddenly, "if the Lord Jesus could hear me if I was to speak out loud. Granny said He could hear in the cellar: may be He can hear in the street." No sooner did she think this than she hunted about for a quiet corner, and then said out loud, "Lord Jesus, give Granny and me bread. I believes as how you can, and will; for mother and me heard that 'ere gentleman say so from the church steps: and oh, Lord Jesus, I be so fearful hungry!" The last words were accompanied by a sob, and then she felt her shoulder touched, and on looking quickly round she saw a gentleman whose face was strange to her.

"My little girl," said he kindly, "to whom were you talking?"

"To the Lord Jesus," said Nell in a trembling voice: "was it wrong?"

"To the Lord Jesus!" repeated the gentleman, at once touched and interested: "and what were you telling the Lord Jesus about?"

"I weren't tellin' Him nothin', only that Granny and me we want bread badly : I thought that the Lord might somehow wonderful hear me, and give us some'at."

"And do you know, little one, that it is the Lord Jesus who has sent me to you?" said the gentleman, putting his hand on her head.

"He heard me, then?" cried Nell.

"Yes, He heard you, as He hears everything. Even if you had whispered He would have heard you, and He has sent me to you."

"He's mighty quick," said Nell, "for I've only just done a talkin' to Him."

"Yes," said the gentleman, smiling kindly, "the Lord has been very quick in sending His answer to you."

"Even though I be so little," said Nell, in a pondering tone. Then after a slight pause she looked up eagerly at him, asking, "Has He sent the bread with you?"

"He has given me something with which to

get it. Come, you look cold and hungry : we will go at once and get some. What is your name ? ”

“ Nell.”

“ And your other name ? ”

“ I aint got no other name, as I knows of : mother and Daddy called me Nell, and so do Granny.”

“ And where do you live, Nell ? ”

Nell described the cellar in Great Wild Street, and then, after a moment's pause, said, “ Sir, is the bread you are going to give me the bread as lasts always ? ”

“ There is no earthly bread that lasts always, little Nell ; but there is the heavenly bread, which if you eat of it you will never hunger any more,—the Bread of Life.”

“ How can I get it, sir ? ” asked the child.

“ You must ask Jesus for it, Nell : He is the only one who can give it to you. Jesus Himself is the Bread of Life, and when we have Him,

when He comes and abides in us, then it is that we have the Bread of Life ; and, little Nell, when you have that Bread you will be satisfied. Just as your body is satisfied after eating the earthly bread which the good God gives you, so will your soul be satisfied with the heavenly bread ; and instead of feeling always alone, desolate and uncared for, you will know that Jesus is always with you, and is abiding in you, and that He loves you."

"I should like to know that," said Nell, the tears starting into her eyes as she realized, perhaps for the first time, how thoroughly alone in the world she was.

"You may know it now, this very moment," said the gentleman, "for He is here, just close to you and me, and He is holding out the Bread to you ; and you must believe you have it."

"And is He sure to give it to me, sir, if I ask Him ?"

"Quite, little Nell. And when you have that Bread of Life, which is Jesus, you need never fear anything, for Jesus will wash away all your sins, if you ask Him, in His own Blood, so that you need never be afraid to die."

"Wash them away, sir?" asked Nell, wondering.

"Yes, Nell. Have you ever told a lie?"

"I guess I have," said the child, hanging her head.

"Then, Nell, that lie grieved our God, and we cannot go to Heaven with a lie on our souls. But Jesus died on the cross for you, and with His Blood He can and will wash away that naughty lie from your soul, if you ask Him. And all the bad things you have said and done, He will wash them away, so as to make you pure for Heaven. He loves you so much, and can see all you do and say, and He will take care of you, little Nell. Will you trust Him? Will you ask Him to wash away all your sins

and to forgive them, and ask Him to take care of you ? ”

“ I guess just I will,” said Nell. Bending her head for a moment, and then raising it she remarked, “ I guess as how He is quite close to me, closer even than mother was when she kissed me afore she was taken away by the bad policeman.” And Nell pattered along the cold, wet pavement joyfully. She did not feel the cold just then : it seemed to her as if the arms of Jesus were encircling her !

It was not long before they reached a bright-looking shop ; and after putting into Nell’s hands a loaf of bread and a packet of tea, the gentleman promised to come and see her, and turned away.

With joyful feet Nell ran back to the cellar, where she found old Granny waiting for her, and showed her her treasures.

“ Blessed Lord, it is Thy gift ! ” murmured Granny, softly.

"Yes," cried Nell: "it is a present from the Lord Jesus. I asked Him to give us something, Granny, and He sent a kind gentleman, who bought these things for us. And not only that, Granny dear, but the Lord came Himself, and was quite close to us, and is still here now."

"Aye, aye, lassie: it is His own sweet way. Old or young, rich or poor,—the Lord loves all, died for all."

And then, as her eyes fell again on the bread and tea, she smiled and murmured,—

"I knew you would never forsake the little one, nor poor Granny."

Granny's voice was weaker than usual that night, and Nell noticed it.

"You are hungry, I guess," she said, as she handed a piece of bread to the old woman.

But Granny shook her head, saying her hunger was over on this earth.

"Not a little wee bit?" asked the child,

coaxingly. "You looked so glad when I told you about it."

"I was glad for your sake, dearie; for I knew that the Lord would take care of little Nell when poor old Granny is gone."

That night little Nell lay awake a long time listening to Granny's murmur.

"At midnight, dear Lord,—at midnight fetch Granny home. She is weary, dear Lord: at midnight come."

In the morning her first thought was Granny; and she raised herself up and called her. But Granny did not answer.

"Granny!" cried Nell louder; and then getting up, she ran towards the corner where Granny always slept. She was still there, with a happy smile on her face; but her hands were so cold that Nell started back with a little cry. Her first feeling on seeing Granny still there had been one of relief; for she did not know that the soul could go to Heaven without the body.

She expected that Granny would go up to Heaven just as she was. She had often seen black coffins carried out of houses, but they made her feel frightened; and she had never asked what they were, and had never for a moment associated them with the beautiful "going home" that Granny so much longed for. So she had been glad to see her still there; for she dreaded her being taken away when she herself was away or sleeping, so that she would miss seeing the Lord Jesus. But now, when she found that Granny neither spoke nor moved, she grew frightened, and ran out of the house with such a scared white face, that a woman, who was standing by, asked her what was the matter. Nell told her, and immediately she ran in, and saw at the first glance that Granny was dead.

"She'll never speak no more on this side of the grave," said the woman to Nell.

"What?" cried Nell.

"She's dead, poor thing. Well, it's what we must all come to."

"Dead?"

"Yes, my dear: that is to say her body is dead, but her soul will never die."

And the woman's face settled down into an expression of bitter hopelessness.

"Must Granny be taken away in a black box?" asked Nell, awestruck.

"Yes, little girl: that she must, and be covered over with earth," said the woman, more as if she was thinking to herself than talking to a child.

"But," said Nell, her whole face changing, as a gasping sob broke from her, "the Lord Jesus was to come Himself and fetch her to Heaven; and He'll never, never find her deep down under the earth."

Suddenly the woman threw her apron over her head and sobbed. The name she had not heard for years, nor cared to think about, spoken

now by the little girl, overcame her bitterness and indifference ; and stooping down, she looked into Nell's face with a compassionate smile.

"Poor little one!" she said, kindly, laying her hand on her head. "I guess you're nearer Heaven than I am. Is there no one to tell you about Jesus as they once told me? I threw away the good news, and have well nigh forgot that there was a God."

"But will the Lord Jesus ever find her?" asked Nell, still crying.

"I expect, little one, He did find her. Her soul has gone to Heaven, if she loved Him. And I remember I heard say once, that after a great many years the body will rise up from the earth,—all beautiful and bright-like,—and will go to Heaven too."

"And did the Lord Jesus come and fetch her soul?"

"He did, or else an angel. I guess, any ways, she's happy now, so don't fret, little one."

“Jesus came and I must have been asleep,” thought Nell to herself, sorrowfully, as almost all day she sat crouched up near Granny.

And so it was that the prayer was answered, —and “at midnight” the Lord Jesus had called Granny home.



CHAPTER V.

MOTHER SEEKS HER NELL.

DURING the time that elapsed between Granny's death and burial, Nell lived with the kind woman who had tried to comfort her; and during that time the child's many questions about death and Heaven made the woman grow so restless and miserable as she thought of her own death and peril, that she sought out the clergyman of the parish in which she lived, and before Granny's funeral took place she had heard and accepted the good news that it was not too late to come to Jesus,—that He had died for *all*, and that no one was too sinful to be washed in His precious blood.

“Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”

That was the question that rose from her thankful heart as she hurried home from the clergyman's house, with a joyful face. The world seemed a different place to her now. Instead of thinking with a despairing heart of the pain, poverty, hunger, wretchedness, and misery she saw all around her, and in herself, she looked at the cold, damp streets, crowded with men, women, and children, as a place into which she was put for a short time, for the purpose of working for Christ, and with the glorious certainty of a beautiful home above, where she would see her Saviour "face to face."

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And at the thought, little Nell came into her mind: motherless little Nell! So she made up her mind that, although she was very poor, having to support three children of her own, her husband having died two years before, she would work harder still, in order to be able to keep the lonely little girl with her. But she

said nothing to Nell about her determination ; and on the day of the funeral they both followed Granny's body to the grave. It was a sad sight to see the child with her ragged frock and bare feet, looking down into the deep, dark grave, with a face too full of gravity and perplexity to be natural in one so young.

She was very silent as they walked home again,—so silent and unlike herself that several times the woman looked down to see if she was with her ; and a sigh escaped her as she saw the little brow knitted as if in deep thought and perplexity.

“Give me your hand, Nell : that'll help you to get along quicker. I guess you are pretty nigh tired out, poor lamb,” said the woman, kindly, as Nell with difficulty tried to prevent being pushed back by the crowd. But instead of accepting the kind offer, she quickly put her hand behind her back, and lingered perceptibly behind.

About a quarter of an hour after, the woman turned round again to see if Nell was following, and saw that she was gone.

Immediately she retraced her steps for some way, but not seeing her, took it for granted that she must have run home quickly. But there was no Nell at home.

"She'll come home towards evening," thought the woman : "she's a freaky little thing, I guess, and goes about as she likes."

But evening came, and no Nell ; and she grew more anxious. Many a time did she throw a shawl over her head and run to the corner of the street in the hope of seeing the little black curly head that she watched and waited for ; but nowhere was it to be seen.

The next morning the woman spent in going back to the cemetery to look for Nell, and in threading many of the back streets, into which she thought the child might have wandered, thereby loosing half a day's work. The thought

of a child of five years old running about the streets alone and uncared for, fretted her too much to allow her to keep still. But her search was all in vain, and she came home tired and dispirited, feeling that the only thing she could now do for her was to pray to the great God who made her, to preserve her from evil.

We must leave Nell for the present, and return to her mother whom we left in the prison cell.

After her trial she was sentenced to four months imprisonment. Four weary months ! It seemed a terribly long time to the mother, as she thought of her child running about the streets of London alone ; but had it not been for that terrible anxiety which weighed heavily on her mind, the four months were not an unhappy time to her. She had learnt and accepted the good news that can make even a dark prison cell bright ; and that good news was, that even though she had come there by

sinning against God, He did not turn away from her, but was always near her, and had forgiven and washed away all her sin with the Blood of Jesus. Surely it was worth many years of imprisonment to learn such good news as that. But although this mother could trust God with herself, she could not yet trust Him entirely in respect to her child.

Night after night she would rock herself too and fro in agony, imagining every terrible thing to have happened to her little one; and even when at last from very weariness she grew still with sleep, horrible dreams of Nell dying alone and uncared for would haunt her, and she would wake with a start and stifled cry to see nothing but fearful darkness all around her. In those terrible moments she learnt to know what it was to cry to God with her whole heart, and to feel what it was almost to hear God's voice in the darkness, saying, "Fear not; for I am with thee."

At last the four months came to an end. The day before she left prison the Chaplain's wife came to see her, and after speaking a few kind words to her, asked what she meant to do when she left.

"I shall look for my little Nell till I find her," she said, eagerly.

"And when you find her," said the Chaplain's wife, kindly, "you must bring her to show us: remember we shall always take an interest in you."

"I can never, never thank you enough for all your goodness to me!" exclaimed the mother, brushing her sleeve hastily across her eyes. "The good God whom you have taught me to love, He alone can reward you. And as for my little one, sure enough I'll bring her to see you as soon as ever I shall find her. She's a rare beauty," she continued, smiling through her tears, "with the brightest black eyes and curly hair as ever I did see: she takes after her father wonderful, she do!"

It was a bright day when Nell's mother once more trod the streets of London a free woman. Free in two ways; for is it not written, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"?

Nell's mother went straight to the cellar in Great Wild Street, where she and Nell had lodged, and with a trembling hand opened the door and looked in. It was dark, cold, and empty. She turned away, sickened with disappointment and anxiety. She made many inquiries about her child, but could hear nothing of her, till she asked at the house of the woman who had been so kind to little Nell after Granny's death. It was now more than three months since Nell had disappeared so suddenly amongst the crowd after Granny's funeral, and since the circumstances recorded in the last chapter had taken place.

"Never fear," said the kind woman consolingly, after she had told the mother all she

knew of Nell: "don't give up hope. I guess as how our God will give her to you at the right time."

The mother turned away comforted. Yes, she was sure God would hear her prayer. She could not doubt the Saviour's love who had done so much for her. She would trust Him, and she felt confident that her little Nell would be given back to her.

For a day or two she still continued to look for her child, and then it suddenly struck her that God was all powerful, that He could send Nell to the mother just as easily as the mother to Nell, and that meanwhile she would work for Him, and continue to pray for her child; so she went back to the chaplain's wife, and for two or three months lived in their house as a servant, till she had made up her mind what to do. By her kind friend's advice she entered a hospital not far away from their house, in order to be trained as a nurse.

And constantly in the midst of her work, surrounded by the sick and dying, she would send up a prayer that she might find her child ; and as day after day passed away, her faith instead of being weakened grew stronger, and she waited patiently for the answer to her prayer which she felt sure was not denied, only delayed.



CHAPTER VI.

NELL'S NEW FRIENDS.

BUT now we must return to little Nell, whose sudden disappearance had caused her kind friend so much anxiety.

The child had been watching the funeral with more curiosity than sorrow. She had often wondered to what place the long black boxes she so often saw being carried out of the houses were taken,—and now for the first time she saw what was done with them. As she walked through the crowded streets, following her friend, she wondered how old Granny was feeling down so deep in the earth. For Nell did not quite understand that the body is only the dress of the soul, so that without the



"Granny, don't you be afeared: Nell's here."—Page 69.

soul the body can feel or do nothing ; and instead of Granny being underneath the cold earth, she was far, far above the blue sky with God.—But Nell did not understand this, and the longer she thought of Granny being alone in the cemetery, the more miserable she grew, and she determined to return.

“May be,” thought the child to herself, “if I speak aloud Granny may hear me, and then I guess she won’t feel so lonely like :” so she quickly started back for the cemetery, and was soon kneeling down by the newly-made grave, and was putting her face as near to the ground as possible.

“Granny,” cried Nell, “don’t you be afeared : Nell’s here, and I’ll come and talk to you a bit every day ; and Granny, the gentleman he tell me the other day as how Jesus is ever near me, and I guess He’s near you too, for I know you loved Him mighty much.”

“She can’t hear you,” said a voice close to

Nell ; and on looking up she saw a child, taller and older than herself, standing by her.

She was very neatly dressed, although at the same time you could tell in a moment she was poor from the many darns in her well-mended frock.

"She can't hear you," she repeated again, as Nell looked up to her with a startled expression on her face.

"But if she can't, she must be fearful lonely," was Nell's answer, as the tears started into her little black eyes.

"She can't be lonely with Jesus," said the child, gravely. "Your Granny you was a talking to is in Heaven, if she loved Jesus : and mother says Heaven is just beautiful, with no cloudy days nor dark nights ; and the streets they be of gold, and there's music more beautiful than ever you heard."

"But Granny aint there. I've just seen the bad men cover her with earth. If only they

had left her in the cellar, may-be the Lord Jesus would have come and taken her body as well as her soul to Heaven!"

Nell's new friend looked perplexed.

"I guess it don't make much difference where they put your Granny; for wherever she was Jesus could find her, for He is stronger than any one, and could move all this earth away; and He can see her down there in the dark, as well, I guess, as He can see you and me. But come home to mother, she can explain it to you."

Hand in hand the two children walked along the streets of London, while little Nell told her new friend her story. She had a very attentive listener, who, when she had finished, exclaimed:—

"I should like you to live with us always, and be my little sister: may be father and mother won't mind. But here is home."

As she spoke she opened the door of a small house, in the window of which was a printed

card, with the words, "Boot and shoe maker."

On a low stool sat the child's father. He was evidently too busy to look up when she entered, nor did she speak to him ; but skipping nimbly across the pieces of leather, nails, etc., which were scattered about the floor in all directions, was about to open the further door, when her father's voice arrested her.

"Patty."

"Well, father?"

"Open the cupboard, and on the second shelf in the right-hand corner you'll find them 'ere buttons you bought yesterday for me : just bring 'em here."

He did not even then look up, but went on working as if he had not a moment to spare.

Suddenly it struck him that the figure he had supposed to be Patty's did not move, and impatiently raising his eyes, they encountered a very different little girl to what he had expected to see.

“Hallo, Patty! What now? who’s this?”

“She’s a little girl, father, as how I found in the cemetery. She’s got no father, and aint got no shoes nor stockings; and I guess she’s hungry, too,” said, Patty, in a trembling voice; for, although her father was a kind man, she stood in considerable awe of him.

Patty had hoped to have been able to have spoken to her mother before speaking to her father, but her little plan had been frustrated.

“And so you think you’d like father to work an hour or two longer, in order to feed this little beggar, or else to go without your own dinner,—one or t’other it must be. No, no: Patty. Depend on it she can get a dinner for herself. Don’t you go a troubling your small head about her. Where’s your father and mother, child?”

“I don’t know where daddy is, and mother is in prison for trying to get a warm cloak for me.”

There was something in the truthful answer

that made the man glance once more at Nell with a kinder look than before.

Truth and courage were the virtues Patty's father admired most.

"Take her and show her to mother."

And as he marked how gladly and eagerly she obeyed, he smiled, saying to himself,—

"She has no fear but what the mother 'll take pity on the little lass. Whoever heard of a woman like my wife turning away from a little girl like that 'ere one? Aye, aye: a woman is a weak thing, but tender and true too! And my little Patty,—she'll be just such another one, that she will. She's a good girl, is my Patty. Well, well: if the Lord has sent us this little girl to feed and to clothe, He'll provide the means with which to do it."

When Patty's mother had heard Nell's sad story, she lost no time before putting on her bonnet and shawl and starting off to Great Wild Street, taking little Nell with her. She

found that the child's story was a true one, and decided that her husband and herself would be doing more rightly by keeping the little girl than by leaving her to be kept and fed by the kind woman who had taken such an interest in her, but who had several children of her own to work for, and who was evidently much poorer than themselves. And the woman, seeing at the first glance that Mrs. Wood was a kind motherly-looking person, and had evidently the interest of Nell at heart, was only too glad for the child's sake to let her take her under her care.

It quite escaped her mind to ask where Mrs. Wood lived, so overjoyed was she to see little Nell once more, and in safe hands ; so that was how it happened that when Nell's mother went to see her, she was unable to tell her where she was.

Then Mrs. Wood brought little Nell back, to Patty's great joy, who stood watching for them at the door.

Poor Patty! She did not look quite so bright a few minutes after, when she saw her mother bring down her nice Sunday frock, with which she began to clothe the little beggar girl.

"Must she wear my best frock?" asked Patty, wistfully.

"She's one of Christ's little ones," answered her mother, kissing her forehead. "Let us give her the best that we can, dear, for His sake: will you, Patty?"

"Yes, mother."

But as she said the words she had to turn her face away, in order to prevent Nell from seeing her tears. Nell had never known before what it was to have on a nice frock, or to have her hair made smooth and tidy; and she was quite astonished at her face as she caught sight of it in the glass. Her mother would have been pleased indeed to have seen her child just then.

That night little Nell fell asleep with Patty's mother's kiss still lingering on her brow.

CHAPTER VII.

SUNDAY SCHOOL.

THE next day was Sunday. Patty, instead of putting on her nice best frock, put on her every-day one,—which, although it was neat and tidy, was unmistakably an old one.

“I can’t go to Sunday-school to-day, mother,” said Patty, as she put away the cups and saucers after their breakfast.

“Why not?” asked her mother.

“Mine will be the oldest frock in the class,” said Patty, struggling to keep back her tears.

“Your frock is nice and tidy, although it is not new. Come, Patty, be a brave girl: you don’t go to school to show off your fine things,

but to learn about God, and how to please Him."

"But, mother, you don't know how disagreeable the girls can be: Jessie Simpson always looks down on poor girls." And Patty really did cry now.

"That kind of thing is difficult to bear bravely, I know, dear; but rich and poor are alike in God's sight, Patty: it don't make no difference to His love. Come, little one, dry your eyes, and look on the bright side."

"Where is Patty going to?" asked Nell, who was sitting on the floor by the fire, stroking "Snow," a little white kitten.

"She is going to school, Nell, to learn more about God."

"May I go too?" asked the child.

Now this was just what Patty did not want. It was bad enough having to go to school in an old frock, she thought to herself; but it would be far worse seeing her new one on Nell every

time she looked at her. Besides which, she felt a little cross with Nell, as she saw how nice and neat she looked.

"If Patty will take you, you may go. But you must not mind not being in her class, as you are some years younger."

All the walk to the school Nell chattered away, but Patty was silent. When they reached the school-room Nell grew frightened at the number of faces looking at her, and Patty therefore begged that she might be allowed to sit in her class for the first Sunday.

There were twelve other children in the class besides themselves; all of them were older than Nell, and she looked at them in mute admiration and surprise, as she watched them reading over to themselves the verses of Scripture which they were to repeat that afternoon. After the lessons were said the teacher spoke to them about the verse.

"For even Christ pleased not Himself."

Nell listened with wide-open eyes as the teacher told them about Jesus Christ leaving His happy home in Heaven, for the sake of each little child in the class,—how great were His sufferings,—and what a terrible death He died. And when she told them about His resurrection a sigh of relief escaped her.

“I be right glad He went home again,” exclaimed Nell.

“So am I,” said the teacher, smiling kindly at the child; “for now every little girl and boy who trusts Jesus and loves Him, will go to His beautiful home too, one day.”

“Are you quite sure?” asked Nell. She had forgotten she was in a class,—forgotten that other children were there,—forgotten everything but this one question, the solving of which was so important to her as it concerned her Granny.

Patty would have nudged her, and told her to sit still and listen instead of troubling the

teacher ; but Miss Murray did not look displeased at the child's questions, on the contrary, she bent forward and took one of Nell's little hands in hers, almost inviting her to ask about anything she did not understand.

"Quite sure," she said in answer to the child's question. "Jesus told some people who loved Him very much, that He was going home to prepare a place for them : He is preparing a place for each little girl who trusts and loves Him."

"But my Granny as was laid in the ground, has she got a place up there too?"

"Yes ; if she trusted in Jesus she is with Him now in heaven."

"No, she isn't there now, I know," said Nell, gravely and earnestly, knitting her brows in deep thought, "unless Jesus has been and taken her since yesterday ; for I saw her laid in the grave my very self."

"Her body is in the grave, but her soul is in

Heaven ; and one day her body will rise too, and you will see her again."

"But is not she lonely down there?" asked the child.

"No, dear, not at all. What is this you have on?" said the teacher, touching Nell's frock.

"A dress," said Nell.

"Yes ; and as long as you have this dress on, it moves about with you. But can this dress move of itself?"

"I guess not," answered the child, still gravely, though the other children smiled.

"Suppose you took it off and locked it up in a box, could it feel the darkness?"

"No."

"Then, dear, that dress is something like your body. As long as the soul is in it, it feels and thinks and moves ; but when the soul leaves it and goes to live with Jesus, the body can feel no longer, and although it is buried it makes no difference to it."

A smile took the place of the frown on the child's face, as she said,—

“Then Jesus did take Granny's soul, and she is happy.”

“Yes, and one day her body will rise too, only it will be a beautiful body.” And then the teacher reminded them how it was that all who trust in Jesus, though sinners, were allowed to enter Heaven ; how it was because Jesus had died for them ; and closed her lesson by telling them that we must follow His example, who although the Son of the King of kings pleased not Himself.”

After school they went to Church, Nell had never been inside a Church before ; and she looked at the number of people, who seemed to move about as quietly as they could, with wondering eyes.

The noise of the organ frightened her at first, and she clutched tight hold of Patty's dress ; but soon her fear gave place to admiration,—

and Patty heard, by and by, a little shrill wordless voice joining in the hymn-tunes—which on looking down she discovered to be Nell's.

Patty's face was brighter, when she met her father and mother outside the Church door after service, than it had been when she had started for school in the morning. She had been asking God to forgive her cross feelings, and to make her glad that Nell had been given her best frock ; for she remembered that, " even Christ pleased not Himself."—When they reached home, Mrs Wood began to prepare for dinner, after laying aside her bonnet and shawl : Patty stood by the fire watching her mother.

" I suppose I ought to go and help her," she thought to herself, " but my fingers are so cold."

" But perhaps mother's fingers are cold too, and she cannot stop to warm them," said another voice inside Patty.

" But I'm tired after my long walk to the

school. I'll get a stool and sit down in this little corner for a minute."

"But," said the other voice, "your mother got up earlier than you this morning, and besides, at breakfast she said she had a headache."

"But Nell is sitting idle."—

"For even Christ pleased not Himself."— Suddenly, as the words which she had heard in the Sunday School that morning flashed across her mind, Patty sprang forward towards the cupboard, from whence her mother was bringing down the plates.

"I'll set them, mother," she said with a bright face.

Now I think the "bright face," was a greater victory than leaving the warm fire. How often a kind and right deed is almost spoilt by a sulky face !

"Patty busy as usual," were her father's words, as he came in to dinner.

Those few words, and her mother's smile, and,

more than all, the knowledge that she had pleased Jesus, was a much greater happiness than warming her fingers at the fire would have been.

That evening they did not go to Church, as Mr. Wood was subject to rheumatism, and so never ventured out in the night air, except in the long summer evenings. During winter he and his wife went in the afternoon to Church, while Patty went to school; and they spent their Sunday evenings in singing hymns.

It was a happy time for little Nell. She sat on the rug with Patty, her head resting on her shoulder, and her eyes fixed on Patty's mother's face, as she sung hymn after hymn,—sometimes alone, sometimes with her husband's and child's voices blending with her own. And when the singing was finished, she still sat there, watching the firelight playing hide and seek with the shadows on the wall and ceiling; and at last her eyes began to close, and on looking down, Patty saw her little newly-found sister was asleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

BIRTHDAY BUNS.

YOU must not think that Nell had forgotten her father and mother all this time. She did not speak much of them, but she thought about them very often ; and every night, as she knelt beside her little bed, as Patty's mother had taught her to do, she always prayed for "Mother and Daddy." She used to lay awake and wish that her mother and father had known about Jesus,—how very, very kind He was, and how much He loved them all ; and how she loved Him, and tried to please Him.

The child found it very difficult sometimes to do what was right, particularly as she was so ignorant, and had only lately learned that to

steal and to say what was not true was displeasing to God. But she tried very hard to conquer the sin of deceit, though again and again she failed.

Patty's tenth birthday took place about six months after little Nell had come to live with the Woods. It happened to fall on a Bank Holiday, and Patty's father had promised to take the two children for a walk in Regent's Park, for little Nell had never seen green grass and tall shady trees, except those in the neatly-kept squares they used to look at through the railings with longing eyes.

It was a pleasure which was eagerly looked forward to by the children. Oh, how long the happy day was in coming!

But at last it arrived; and as the children opened their eyes in the morning, to their delight, the sun was peeping brightly through the cracks in the shutters.

The day before, grand preparations had taken

place in the way of cooking. Patty's mother stood at the table, with her sleeves tucked up, and before her lay some flour, sugar, and butter, all in preparation for making six "birthday buns," to be eaten at tea the next day; and what was best of all in Nell's eyes, as she stood watching what Mrs. Wood did, there was a little packet of currants, and the word "Patty" was to be printed with them on each bun.

This was what Patty found her mother doing as she came home from morning school on the day before her birthday. And a pleasant surprise it was to her. Not even the grandest birthday cake, made at the very best pastry-cook's, all white and pink, and decorated with crackers of all colours, and sugar little girls and boys standing gracefully on the snow-white top, could have given greater pleasure to any little girl than did these six brown buns, with "Patty" printed with black currants on each, to these two children.

"They look uncommon nice," said Nell, as on her birthday morning Patty opened the cupboard to have one more look at her birthday buns, and lifted down the plate on which they lay from the shelf for Nell's inspection.

"That they do," said Patty, gaily. "I guess they won't take long to eat;" and then closing the cupboard she ran into the front room, at the sound of her father's voice calling her.

Mrs. Wood was upstairs "tidying," and Nell was left alone, except for Snow, the little white kitten, who lay on the rug in front of the fire as usual. Snow never seemed to find the fire too hot, not even on a bright summer's day like this one. Nell went and opened the cupboard again, and by standing on tiptoe on a chair she could see the tempting buns.

"How good they look," said the child to herself: "I guess as how I could eat 'em all,—one, two, three, four, five, six," as she touched

each one. "Two for nobody to eat in partic'lar. I wonder how they taste? I guess I might eat a crumb to see."

"No, Nell," whispered a voice inside her: "they are not yours."

"Not a whole one, only a crumb," breaking a small piece off. "It *is* good: I'll just take another crumb."

"Thou shalt not steal!" said the voice.

"But I'm only tasting, and its wonderful good; but I've made a hole in it, and I guess as how they'll find out. I may as well take the whole bun, may be then they'll forget how many there were."

"Jesus sees you," whispered the voice again.

But even this thought did not shake Nell in the longing to eat the whole bun; the little taste she had had made her long for more, so lifting it off the plate she bit off a large piece. Suddenly she thought the door handle moved, so thrusting the bun into her pocket she jumped

off the chair, shutting the cupboard after her. A minute afterwards Patty came in.

"I'm just going round to Mr. Mason's with a message from father: shall you come?" asked Patty.

"No," said Nell, shortly.

Patty looked surprised, but taking her hat from off a peg went out without speaking.

Dinner time came, but Nell, could not eat. Everything seemed to choke her, and when Mrs. Wood asked her what was the matter she nearly cried, and felt inclined to tell it straight out then and there; but her fear of Patty's father kept her from doing so.

All the way to the Park Patty chattered away to her father, Nell was silent and grave at first; but not for long. She was soon laughing and talking as well as her lively companion, and when for the first time in her life she felt the soft cool grass under her feet, and saw the green shady trees, and heard the many birds singing

so blithely, she quite forgot the sin she had given way to that morning. Mr. Wood sat on a bench under one of the trees smoking, thoroughly enjoying the fresh air and rest, which he so seldom could have, while the two children had such a game of play as Nell had never had before, for in fact it was only just lately that Nell had learnt what the word "play" meant.

At last the happy afternoon closed in, and Mr. Wood announced it to be time to return home. During the time in the Park, Nell had quite forgotten what had happened in the morning; but when Patty remarked, as they returned home, that she was getting hungry for the buns, she suddenly remembered her sin, and all the brightness of the afternoon seemed faded in a moment. What would she not have given never to have touched the bun! But the sin was done. Tea was all ready when they reached home. The kettle was humming away

on the fire, before which Snow lay curled up ; the tea-cups were set round the table on the spotless white cloth, and the bread and butter and birthday buns were only waiting to be eaten.

"Well, wife, so here we are again," said Mr. Wood, hanging up his hat.

"Well, and how have you fared?" asked his wife.

Patty was only too ready to enter into a long description of all they had seen and done.

"And did you enjoy it too, little one?" asked Mrs. Wood of Nell.

"Yes," answered Nell. But the poor little face looked white and tired, for she had caught sight of the buns on the table.

"You're hungry, I expect : Patty, set the chairs round dear." But Patty did not obey immediately, she was looking at the buns.

"Why, mother," she exclaimed, "if one of 'em isn't gone ! You made six and there are

only one—two—three—four—five : yes, only five.”

“Yes, one is gone : look in the cupboard, may be one of ’em slipt off when you brought ’em down.”

“I guess as how Snow has eaten it,” said Nell, quickly.

You see how one sin leads to another.

“Snow knows better,” said Patty, peering meanwhile into the cupboard. “No, mother : it aint here. Wherever can it be gone to !”

“Well, we had better leave it now, dear,” said her mother, gravely, as a sudden thought passed through her mind. “You and father must halve the bun that is over, between you, instead of each having two.”

But a cloud seemed to have fallen on them all, and for several moments they were silent, which silence made Nell feel very uncomfortable and miserable. How much she wished that she had never looked at the buns ; but she had,

like Eve, first looked, then tasted, and now you see she had added to her sin by telling an untruth about it. Poor little Nell !

Patty, who was never silent for long, soon began to chatter away, and before tea was over she was as merry as usual ; but as for Nell, she was quite silent, and did not at all enjoy her tea, but left her bun untasted on the plate, to Patty's great surprise.

She was glad when at last tea was finished, when she was able to slip away into the empty working room. When there, she crouched down in a corner by the window, feeling sure that she would not be disturbed, as Patty's father meant to take a holiday that evening. She could see the stars twinkling away, far, far above the roofs of the opposite houses ; and could hear the pattering of feet along the pavement outside ; and oh, how miserable, how lonely, how wicked and bad she felt !

Suddenly the door opened, and Patty came

in, feeling her way towards the cupboard. Something moving up in the corner by the window made her start, and give a little cry.

"It's me," said Nell.

"You did make me jump," said Patty.
"Whatever are you doing here?"

But Nell's only answer was a flood of tears.

"What is the matter, Nell?" asked Patty, kneeling down beside her, and putting her arm round her.

"It wasn't Snow as stole the bun: it was me," sobbed the child.

Patty sprang away from her, and looked at her with a horror-struck face.

"You—stole—the—bun!" exclaimed Patty, slowly, and with a world of scorn in her tone: "Then you are a very, very bad girl, and I shan't love you no more!"

"I know I'm very bad," sobbed Nell.

"You are a thief,—a little thief, Nell! I guess as how father won't keep you no longer."

Patty forgot that she was a sinner too ; and although she was not untruthful like Nell, she was more selfish, and self-righteous.

"I wonder what he will say," resumed Patty, as Nell's sobs grew louder : "he who has gived you bread and let you sleep here, just as if you had been his own little girl. I guess he won't have no more to do with you, naughty, bad little thief, that you are !" And as Nell did not speak, but only sobbed the louder, Patty turned away with the words,—

"I'll go and tell mother."

With a flushed indignant face, Patty flew into the back parlour, and told all to her father and mother.

"Ungrateful little chit !" exclaimed her father.

"That she is !" answered Patty. "I've just been a tellin' her what a bad, naughty little girl she is."

"Poor little Nell !" sighed the mother.

"Think, Patty,—she has no father, no mother to help her."

"Mother is right : as seems to me she always is," said Mr. Wood. "Come Patty, my dear; you and I must remember that we aint perfect, and may be are quite as sinful in God's sight as that poor little girl yonder, only perhaps not in the same way."

"But you have been so good to her, father," put in Patty, screwing up the corner of her apron and hanging her head.

"And has not God been a thousand times more good to you and me, lass ; and yet don't we sin against Him daily,—nay, hourly ? And don't He forgive us ? And Patty, my dear, just mark my word,—I wish you were more like your mother in this 'ere respect than your father. I'd rather see my girl ready to make excuses for another's faults, than eager to accuse them : aye, my lass ?"

Her father smiled kindly across at her ; but

Patty coloured, and felt inclined to cry, as she saw what an unkind part she had been acting. But she checked her tears, and turned away to take some water off the fire which was boiling over, as her mother had gone into the working-room to see after Nell.

Mrs. Wood could hardly see little Nell's figure through the darkness, but was guided to her by the sound of her sobs.

"Poor little girl!" said she, tenderly folding her in her arms.

"I am—a—thief!" gasped out the child, between her sobs. "I ate the bun."

"I know you did, dear, and quite forgive you," she answered, kissing the tear-stained little face.

"And you won't love me no more," cried Nell.

"I shall love you just the same as ever I did, little Nell."

And then, as the sobs grew softer, she told her gently of One who had been watching His

little child, and who was so grieved to see her take what was not her own and then tell a lie about it; and reminded her how she must ask Him to forgive her, and how He would wash the dark stain away with His own Blood.

And Nell went then at once to the Fountain which is ever open, and was washed and made clean. And so instead of scolding the little child, as Patty had done, the mother told her of the loving mercy of Jesus; and the little wanderer was brought home.

Patty was especially kind to Nell all the rest of the evening, and even conquered her self-righteousness so far as to tell her she was sorry she had "spoken so sharp to her;" and she did not mind a bit now only having half a bun.



CHAPTER IX.

PATTY GOES INTO SERVICE.

“**W**IFE,” said Mr. Wood, one evening, after the two children had gone to bed,—“wife, our Patty is growing a great girl.”

“Yes,” answered his wife; but her lips trembled, as she knew what was coming.

“Ten, aint she?” he inquired, after a moment’s pause: “eleven, come next August. You know well enough what my thoughts are about it, wife.”

“Time enough, John,” said his wife, smiling at him, but with tears in her eyes. “She’s some long way off eleven yet, and I tremble to think of her alone out at service.”

“If it’s our duty to send her, the Lord will take care of her, wife,” was Mr. Wood’s answer.

And his wife knew what he said was true ; so it was not long before one morning in June saw Patty walking down the street by her father's side, who was carrying a small box in his hand, which contained her "little all."

Her mother stood at the door shading her eyes, and watching her child as long as she was in sight ; and Nell stood by her side, wiping away her tears with the mother's apron.

The excitement of going to her first place had almost taken away Patty's sorrow at leaving home. She had, it is true, shed a few tears the last evening, as her mother knelt for the last time at her bedside, and prayed to her Father to protect and guard her child ; but when the morning actually came, and the birds sang so cheerfully in a solitary scorched old tree not far from Patty's window, and when the joyous sun looked in on her so brightly, her usual spirits returned, and she was full of excite-

ment. It was a bright anticipating face that looked round for the last time on her mother, as they turned the corner of the street and were lost to her view.

The place to which Patty went was not so very far off from her home. Mrs. Merton, her mistress, was a young married lady, and lived in a small but comfortable little house, and kept only one servant besides Patty. The name of this servant was Emma. She was a good deal older than Patty, and had a good-natured face, but was rather rough and abrupt in her manner to Patty, who stood consequently rather in awe of her. But after a day or two she was soon at her ease with her, and the two got on well together. But there was one thing that troubled Patty. They both shared the same bed-room, and Patty was surprised to see that Emma never knelt down to pray, either in the morning or evening.

"I wonder when she prays," thought Patty.

It never struck her that Emma never prayed at all. She thought so much about it, that one night she had made up her mind to ask her after the candle was put out, and the room was dark.

"Emma," said Patty,—“Emma, when do you pray to God?”

“Don’t you begin a talkin’ this time of night,” said Emma, crossly.

Patty was silent; but she determined to make another effort to find out on Sunday afternoon, as they sat for a minute or two before the kitchen fire, before they put on their things to go to Church; for Mrs. Merton always stayed at home in the afternoon, in order to let the two servants go to Church.

“I never see you praying, Emma,” remarked Patty, looking at Emma with her large truthful eyes.

“What business is it of yours?” answered Emma, abruptly.

"No business as I knows of exactly," answered Patty, looking a little surprised and perplexed at the cross answer.

"Then why don't you mind your own affairs?" responded Emma.

"I didn't mean to make you cross," said Patty. "But—but, Emma, you *do* pray, don't you?"

"No," said Emma, shortly.

"Never pray to God, neither night nor morning!" exclaimed Patty. "Why mother she telled me the last morning, never to forget to pray, or to read my Bible. Don't you read your Bible, Emma?"

"Aint got one."

"Not got a Bible? then you may always read mine, Emma."

"Thank you; but I don't want to read it, as I knows of. The Bible aint meant for folks like me: I aint like you, Patty." And as Emma looked at the anxious, perplexed little face

before her, tears rushed into her eyes, and covering her face with her hands, she said between her sobs :

“I wish,—oh, I wish I was like you, Patty ! but I aint. I’m a bad, naughty girl, and I don’t care to do right, as you do.”

Patty knelt down by Emma’s chair, and putting her arm round her, said,—

“But, Emma, the Bible is meant for us sinful folk ; and I am sure Jesus loves you, although you are a naughty girl. I am a bad girl too, but He loves me all the same, I know He does.”

Emma got up from her chair abruptly, and left the room ; and when Patty went upstairs a few minutes after to get ready for Church, she found Emma just putting on her bonnet.

“I can’t be kept waiting for you, Patty, so make haste,” she said crossly.

“It is a quarter to three, Emma : we shall be in plenty of time.”

"But I was to meet my friend at the Church door at five minutes to three: and she aint a one to be kept waiting."

"Is she coming to Church with you, Emma?"

"No," said Emma, laughing. "She aint particular fond of Church, as I knows of."

"But," said Patty, hesitating, and colouring, "you are not going for a walk instead, are you?"

"Well, if I am, what's the harm, I should like to know?"

"Mistress always thinks we go to Church, Emma: it aint right to deceive her."

"Aint it? Just you mind your own business, and I'll mind mine." Then suddenly looking sharply at Patty, she added, "and don't you go a tale-tellin', mind that."

Poor little Patty. Service was not quite so delightful as she had fancied, and yet she was not unhappy. She had grown to love her mistress, who was always kind and gentle to

her ; and what made her happier still was the knowledge that Jesus would help her to do right.

Her mother would sometimes come and see her on Saturday afternoons : now and then her father ; and generally little Nell came with them. Those were happy days for Patty, when, after dinner on Saturday afternoons she would quickly wash up the dishes and plates ; and after hurrying upstairs to make herself neat, would take up a book, and sit down by the kitchen fire, and listen for the sound of feet coming down the quiet street.

It was always a bright little face that opened the door to father, mother, and Nell.

And as Mrs. Wood saw how well and happy Patty was, she asked God to forgive her for her faithless fear about her.

CHAPTER X.

PATTY'S TEMPTATION.

FOUR years have passed away, and Patty is still in the same place. A strong healthy looking girl she is, and her mistress has grown thoroughly to trust and to love her.

Emma was also there still, and she did not mind now so much as formerly hearing Patty speak of sacred things, and now and then Patty had ventured to read a chapter of the Bible to her, and Emma had listened attentively to it.

But she was often unhappy at seeing how deceitful Emma was, and how she told her mistress many untruths, without even her con-

science seeming to prick her at all. But Patty was mistaken in thinking Emma's conscience did not prick her.

Sometimes when Patty was asleep, Emma would lie awake, thinking of the many lies she had told, the many things she had stolen, and would shiver at the thought of the many sins that lay so heavily on her heart. But Patty knew nothing of this.

One day as Patty was dusting the ornaments on the drawing-room mantle-piece, a beautiful Dresden china vase fell from her hands and broke to pieces.

Patty stood and looked at the pieces, with a horror-struck expression on her face. It was only the other day that Patty had heard her mistress telling a friend how much she valued this vase, not only for its own sake, but because her only brother, who last year had been killed in a railway accident, had given it to her.

Just at that moment Emma came in, and

catching sight of Patty's face and the broken vase exclaimed,—

“My, Patty! what have you done?”

“Oh Emma,” sobbed poor Patty, “what ever shall I do? Missus will be dreadful sorry about it; and master—I daren't think how angry he'll be.”

“Well, it won't do no good to cry like that about it; and after all, Patty, master need know nothing about how it was you,” said Emma.

“What do you mean?”

“Why it's easy enough to pretend the cat did it. I'll go and find it, and shut it up for you in the room. I aint over partic'lar about speaking the truth, you know, so when mistress says anything I'll just tell her I shut up the cat here by mistake.”

There was a curious expression on Emma's face as she looked at Patty while speaking. Patty had often told her how wrong it was to

tell a lie,—how it displeased God ; and now that the temptation to do so came to Patty herself, Emma wondered whether she would practise what she had preached. She had often asked Emma to read the Bible, and to come to Jesus and to serve Him,—would she now drive her further from serving Him, by letting her for her sake serve Satan ?

Patty stood still, and Emma could see her lips quivering ; and then, without a word, she left the room.

“She’ll be a brave girl if she goes and tells mistress. I’d sooner tell a dozen or two of lies than let master know about it : he comes down mighty hard, he do, only for breaking a saucer or two. But I guess she’s gone to get the cat : she aint so mighty good after all, I expect.” And Emma left the room, for fear of her mistress coming and finding her in company with the broken vase.

But Patty was not looking for the cat ; and

Emma looked at her in surprise as Patty came and told her she was going there and then to tell her mistress all about it.

"Well now, Patty, if you aint just a goose!" exclaimed Emma, laughing. "What's the harm of telling a lie now and then?"

"I've just been praying about it, Emma; and I'm ever so sorry I didn't say at once that I meant to tell about it."

"But master will be awful put out about it, Patty. Last time you broke that plate he said as how he couldn't have such a careless girl in the house. I guess he won't keep you no more, Patty, when he hears on't."

"But that don't ought to make any difference," was Patty's answer. "And if I do right, God won't let no harm come to me."

And though there were tears in her eyes, Patty did not wait to wipe them away, for fear her courage should leave her, but went at once and knocked at the dining-room door. But her

mistress was not there, and Patty, on turning round, saw her coming downstairs.

"Why, Patty," she said, kindly, noticing her red eyes, "is anything the matter?"

The kind voice and manner were quite enough to break down all her fortitude, and she began sobbing out something about being very sorry and "broken to pieces." The last of her sentences were quite unintelligible to her mistress.

"Have you broken something, Patty? Well, we all have accidents now and then, you know; and you needn't be frightened to tell me about it. Come and sit down a moment, and don't try to speak till you have left off crying."

They were standing by the drawing-room door, and her mistress drew Patty in, in order that she might control her sobbing a little by resting a few minutes, when suddenly her eye caught sight of the broken vase lying on the ground.

"Oh, Patty : you don't mean to say you have broken that vase,—the one my brother gave me? How careless!"

And in a moment her mistress was kneeling on the floor, trying to get the broken pieces together, and, at the same time, dashing away a tear or two.

"It is the very last thing in the house I should like to have been broken, as it was given to me by a very dear brother. No," she said, as Patty sobbed out her sorrow for her misdeed : "it's no use your being sorry,—it is done now. It is really most careless of you. I don't know what your master will say. You had better go and send Emma up to me to gather the pieces carefully together : I cannot trust you to do it."

"I told you you were a goose for your pains," was Emma's comment as Patty gave her the message from her mistress.

That night, after the candle had been put out

in their room, and the two girls were just falling off to sleep, the door opened, and Patty saw her mistress come in, shading the candle with her hands for fear they might be asleep ; but on seeing Patty's eyes open she came to her bedside, and smiled kindly as she saw her red eyes, saying, " Oh, I was afraid it might be so ! You must not make yourself miserable, Patty ; it was only an accident, and you were a good girl to come and tell me at once. I spoke more sharply than I ought to have done : come, now, no more tears about it, Patty, go to sleep and forget all about it." And stooping down she added, in a soft voice, " and thank the Lord Jesus for helping you to tell the truth so frankly. Always try to do what is right, dear child, and serve Him."

" Patty," said Emma, after Mrs. Merton had left the room, " I wish I had someone to help me to do what is right, like you have."

" Do you mean Jesus, Emma ? "

“Yes, I should like just to be able to go and ask His help, like you did this morning. I guess, though, He could not love me as He loves you : there aint nothing to love in me as I can see ! I’m such an awful bad girl, Patty, and I’ve told a thousand stories, and aint been sorry about it at all. And I looked into your Bible t’other day, and I saw something about no liars going into heaven. Tell me, Patty,” she asked earnestly, “aint there no possible way as I might get there ?”


And then Patty told Emma of the all-loving Saviour who died for just such sinners as she, who loved her, notwithstanding all her sins, and who was ready to wash them out then and there with His own Blood. And then the two girls both knelt down together in the dark, and the Saviour, who is willing to receive all who come to Him, heard their prayer. And Emma was enabled to believe her sins, though so great and so many, were blotted out and for-

given for the sake of Jesus, who had borne their punishment on the cross in their stead; for it is written, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."



CHAPTER XI.

FOUND.

NE hot Saturday afternoon as Nell was on her way to see Patty, the streets seemed to her unusually crowded with omnibuses and cabs. But Nell was well used to thread her way skilfully among them, and hitherto had never come to any harm. But to-day she felt languid and tired, and walked slower than usual. A driver pulled up suddenly with alarm at finding a little head of black hair so close under his horse's nose. The sun poured down in its fiercest heat on the pavements, and somehow little Nell felt thoroughly exhausted ; and as she came to a still more densely crowded crossing, she leant against a lamp-post, feeling

too faint and unwell to make the effort of crossing till the crowd had somewhat abated.

At last the street seemed to be clearing, and Nell found courage to move from the lamp-post and to cross the road.

Suddenly there was an exclamation from a cab driver, and in a moment Nell's little figure was seen lying senseless on the ground. A gentleman was in the cab which had run over her, and quickly jumping out he lifted the unconscious child from the ground, and placing her in the cab gave orders to the driver to convey her to a children's hospital. Nell did not wake up for a long time, and when at last she did she could not think where she was.

"Try and lie still, dear," said a voice near her. And on raising her eyes she saw a kind face bending over her.

"Where am I?" asked Nell.

"In a hospital, with a lot of other little children," said the nurse. And sure enough

when Nell looked down the long room she saw two straight lines of little white beds : almost all of which were occupied by children, some of them about her own age, others older. A great many of the children were sitting up looking at picture books and playing with toys, while the faces of others looked too pale and worn to enjoy such things.

"I want Patty !" cried Nell.

"Who is Patty ? We want to know where you live, that we may let your friends know about you."

Nell told the nurse where she lived, and then went off into a restless sleep. Often that night she would wake up and cry for Patty, and ask to be taken home, and it was all the kind nurse could do to comfort her ; and towards morning she went into such a terrible fit of crying, that the nurse beckoned to another to come and try her skill at soothing her.

"You generally manage to comfort the children better than I," she said, giving up her

place to the new nurse, who moved softly towards the bed.

She was a young-looking woman, with dark hair, and with a peaceful though somewhat sad-looking face,—a face that looked as if she had gone through a great deal of trouble; and had, by God's strength and help alone, been able to bear it.

Softly she came across the room, and looked down at the little black curly head of hair and dark eyes. Suddenly, as she stood looking down on the little face, her own changed; and she knelt down at the bedside, hiding her face with her hands, and quivering all over.

To whom could such a curly head of hair and those black eyes belong but to her Nell,—her own little Nell, whom she had lost so long! whom the last time she had seen her, was pattering after her with little bare feet, wailing out, "Mother: mother!" and for whom she had been waiting, and watching, and praying?

Could it indeed be her child?

She dared not look up, for fear her eyes had deceived her. Was the good God to whom she had been praying for so long, about to answer her prayer? Her heart throbbed, and she trembled all over. At last she took courage and looked up, and encountered a pair of dark, sharp eyes, just preparing to break out into tears again.

"Nell, Nell; my own little Nell! don't you remember me?" cried the nurse, as she threw her arms round the child.

"I want Patty," wailed Nell. "Where is Patty?"

"I don't know where she is: but don't you remember me?"

"Why don't you bring Patty to me?" cried Nell again. "Oh, take me home: *do* take me home!"

"You *are* home," cried the nurse, eagerly; "for you are with mother. Don't you remember mother and daddy, Nell?"

“You can’t be mother: she’s in prison,” returned Nell, still sobbing. “I want *Patty*: why don’t *Patty* come?”

“May be *Patty* will come soon, dear: but you can’t have forgotten mother, who loves you so much?”

“I don’t want mother: I want *Patty*.”

The words shot a pang through the mother’s heart. Could it be true that this *Patty* occupied all her little one’s heart, and that there was not one corner left for her,—the mother, who had been waiting and longing for this day!

It was a bitter disappointment to her, and she could do nothing but lift her heart to her Father in prayer, asking Him to strengthen her for the duties which lay before her. And then she occupied herself in making her child more comfortable,—shaking her pillow, and singing softly, in order that she might fall asleep. She hoped her sleep would rest and refresh her; but it was a very troubled one, and she was

constantly calling out for "Granny," "Daddy," "Mother," and "Patty," in turns.

Whenever her own name was spoken by her little Nell, the mother's heart would throb with joy.

The news of Nell's accident was sent to Mr. and Mrs. Wood ; and in the afternoon of the following day Mrs. Wood and Patty came to see her. They looked anxiously at each bed as they passed the long rows, hoping to see the one they wanted. Nell's mother held up her finger as they neared the right one, for the child had just fallen into a quiet dose.

Patty stood at the foot of the bed with the tears rolling down her cheeks, as she saw how pale and altered Nell looked ; and Nell's mother could not but love Patty the moment she saw tears spring to her eyes.

"Is she dangerously ill?" whispered Mrs. Wood.

She was surprised to see the look of pain flash

across the nurse's face as she asked the question, and she was still more surprised to learn her strange story.

Patty walked home again by her mother's side crying, as she realized that the little girl she had grown to love so dearly, was not really her sister ; but had only been lent her for a time by God.



CHAPTER XII.

NELL'S MISSION.

WHEN Nell awoke from sleep her first word sent joy to her mother's heart.

"Mother," she said in a weak, faint voice. "Mother!" she repeated. "I dreamt as how—mother was here." And then as she turned towards the nurse a faint look of recognition seemed to cross her face, and she stretched out her hands, and in a moment was folded in her mother's arms.

"You won't leave me no more, mother, will you?" she whispered.

"Never, never, on earth, my darling!" breathed the mother, fervently; and she praised God

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"You won't leave me no more, mother, will you?"--Page 123.



again and again in her heart for giving her back her child.

"Mother," said Nell, "will you thank Jesus for sending you to me : I feel so tired ?"

Then God had been teaching little Nell as well as herself about Jesus ? The mother's heart was full.

Nell did not die : God had a work for her to do on earth. But the doctors shook their heads as day after day they came to her bedside ; and at last one day they broke the news to her mother, and told her that the child would be a cripple for life : she would never run about again, never be able to play like other children.

She did not hide it from her child.

Little Nell cried about it at first ; but one day she looked up into her mother's face with the words, "I guess as how God has given me you to make up for it, mother."

And the mother thought so too.

"Mother," said Nell one day, "I wonder where Daddy is?"

"He's in Heaven, Nell. It was Jesus who made him happy, and took him to Heaven, and one day He'll take you and me, and we three shall all see each other in Heaven again."

"I'm right glad of that, mother," was Nell's answer.

It was not long after this, that the chaplain and his wife came to see Mother's Nell,—and they told the mother that a nurse was wanted in a Cottage Hospital, in a country town not far from London, and advised her to apply for the situation, as the country air might bring the roses back to her child's cheeks. She therefore did so; and as the superintendent of the Cottage Hospital was a friend of the chaplain's wife, she spoke a word for her.

Nell's mother got the situation; and soon the country brought back Nell's colour, and it was a bright little face that belonged to the child

who was so constantly seen moving through the ward on crutches.

Nell had a work to do in the Hospital. Whenever a sick child was brought in, she would do her utmost to make her happy. She would tell her stories, bring her flowers, and talk to her of Jesus and His love. And many a little one learnt to know and to love the Saviour from hearing Nell speak of Him. Many a face would brighten as they saw Nell pass their beds, with a smile for each,—many a bad word was checked when she was near,—and many an earnest cry was sent up to God from weary, restless hearts, praying for the peace which was so plainly written in Nell's face.

And here we must leave her : leave her in the midst of a happy busy life,—a life spent in God's service. It was here that Nell lived ; and it was here that she, like old Granny, heard the Lord's voice which called her into the presence of the King.

And, Patty? We must not leave without giving one more look at Mrs. Merton's servant. She is still in her first place, trusted and loved, and when the house grew too small to hold all the many little children whose footsteps sounded like music in their mother's ears, Patty moved with the family into a larger one, and became nurse to the children. Emma had to leave sometime before on account of her mother becoming sick, but she often writes to Patty, and thanks her for telling her about her Saviour.

I must add here that Emma gave up walking with her friend without her mistress' leave, ever since that well-remembered talk with Patty, and since that time had spent her Sunday afternoons at Church, until her mother's illness obliged her to leave her place.

And now that her mother was almost too old and infirm to allow of Emma looking out for another place, she lived a bright happy life in

her own little country home, doing what she could to comfort and help her mother. Moreover, on Sundays she went to a Bible Class, which was taken by the clergyman's daughter ; and many a pleasant afternoon she spent studying her Bible with other young women of about her own age, who also attended the Bible Class.

But you must not think that Emma never gave way to ill-temper again, or spoke a sharp word. No : she often found herself both speaking and acting wrongly ; and many a time she felt discouraged and disheartened. But she knew now of the Fountain that washes away *all* sin, and of the Friend to whom she might go for strength to resist temptation.

And so it was that little Nell, Patty, and Emma lived happy lives, and were all three preparing to live for ever in the Presence of the King.



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